

MUKUNDAMĀLA

*Introduction*

*Mukundamālā* (the garland of Viṣṇu) belongs to the religious lyric literature of India since it has been composed in such a way as to be sung and presents itself in the form of a poem which expresses the writer's own thoughts and sentiments of love of God Viṣṇu (*bhakti*) at no great length as a general rule, in stanzas or strophes. Kāvya style is clearly seen in the poem, which is complex and hermetic in concepts, elaborate and ornate in form, and interspersed with alliterations and play of words<sup>1</sup>. It contains long compounds, figures of both sound and sense, and sentences heaped with adjectives<sup>2</sup>.

This well-known poem, most popular among Vaiṣṇavas, is considered to be one of the earliest religious lyrics in Sanskrit. The poem expresses profoundly the passionate cry of the heart for God and the intense longing for fellowship with him.

The work is commonly attributed to Kulaśekhara<sup>3</sup>. Scholars do not agree on the personality of the author or on the date of its composition. R. G. Bhandarkar identifies Kulaśekhara with Kulaśekharaṅka (A.D. 1150) and observes that a verse (XI.2.36) of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is found in the *Mukundamālā*<sup>4</sup>. This position is rejected because the two personalities are different and I have not found the alleged text of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in any of the existing versions of the *Mukundamālā*. K. Rama Piṣharoti is of the opinion that the author of the *Mukundamālā* should not be identified with Kulaśekhara Ālvār, for he thinks that there is no convincing proof for doing so. He places the work in the seventh century A.D.<sup>5</sup>. S. N. Dagupta tends to place this work in the first half

1. See OSCAR BOTTO, *Letteratura classica dell'India antica*, Roma, 1964, p. 119.

2. SADHU RAM, *Essays on Sanskrit Literature*, Delhi, 1965, p. 157 ff.

3. There is no discrepancy on the name of the author.

4. See R. G. BHANDARKAR, *Vaiṣṇavism, Sāivism and minor religious systems*, Strassburg, 1913, pp. 49-50.

5. See his *Sṛimukundamālā* (with Tātparyadīpikā of Rāghavānanda), Annamalai University Sanskrit Series, No. 1, Annamalainagar, 1933, appendix, pp. III f.

of the ninth century and identifies the author with Kulaśekhara Ālvār who also wrote the *Perumāḷ Tirumōḷi* in Tamil<sup>6</sup>. The colophon of the *Mukundamālā* attributes a royal dignity to the author Kulaśekhara and says that he was a Viṣṇava bhakta<sup>7</sup>.

The commonly held view in South India is that the same Kulaśekhara wrote both the *Mukundamālā* and the *Perumāḷ Tirumōḷi*. This view can be taken as plausible, though there is no convincing proof either for rejecting the identification or for admitting it. It is rather strange that this Viṣṇava bhakti lyric should have found an advaitin, Rāghavānanda, as commentator, in so late a period as the seventeenth century.

The text given here does not agree with the same in any edition that has appeared so far except with that of K. Rama Pisharoti<sup>8</sup>. The difference is not in the variants but in the number of the verses:

1. *Kāvyaśaṅgraha*, edited by J. Haeberlin, *Epigraphia Indica*, Calcutta, has 22 verses;
2. *Kāvyaṃālā*, edited by Pandit Durgāprasād and Kāśīnāth Pāndurang Parab, second edition, published by Tukārām Jāvaji, Bombay, 1893, has 34 verses;
3. *Sṛimukundamālā* (with Tātparyadīpikā of Rāghavānanda), edited by K. Rama Pisharoti, Annamalainagar, 1933, has 46 verses. This edition has been followed by T. Sundarāchāri in his *Sṛimukundamālāi*, Sanskrit-Tamil work, Madras, 1962;
4. *Sṛimukundamālā*, Sanskrit-Tamil, by K. Srinivasachari, Lipco, Madras, 1975, has 40 verses;
5. *Mukundamālāi*, Grantha-Tamil, by A. Anantāchāri, 1929, Madras, has 40 verses;
6. *Mukunda Mālā*, by V. V. K. Rangachari, Cocanada, 1928, Sanskrit-English, contains 40 verses.

I have accepted the text that had been commented upon by the seventeenth century commentator, Rāghavānanda, for he must have accepted it as authentic to comment upon after examining various versions. Besides, all the verses of other texts are included in the present text. I give my own translations of the text and my own explanation in the light of early Viṣṇava theism without any bias, either advaitic or viśiṣṭādvaitic.

The poem was popular also outside of India. For verse 7 of the present text is cited in an inscription of Pagan (13th century A.D.)

6. See his *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III, Cambridge, 1952, p. 67.

7. See verse 46 in our version.

8. That is, number 3 of the various versions referred to in the introduction to our text.

E. Hultsch in his *A Vaishnava Inscription at Pagan*<sup>9</sup> says that the inscription contains one verse in the Sanskrit language and Grantha alphabet, and a prose passage in the Tamil language and alphabet. The Sanskrit verse is taken from the *Mukunda Mālā* (verse 7 of our text) and the Tamil passage records gifts by a native of Magōdayarpaṭṭanam in Malaimaṇḍalam, i.e., Cranganore in Malabar. His name, Kulaśekhara Nambi, indicates he was a devotee of the saint Kulaśekhara; the opening verse of inscription derives from his *Mukundamālā*. The Viṣṇu Temple of Nāṇātēcivinnakar<sup>10</sup> at Pukkam (Pagan) in Burma was the recipient of the gift.

### THE SANSKRIT TEXT

#### Verse 1

vande mukundamaravinda dalāyatākṣaṁ kundendu saṅkhadaśanaṁ  
[śiśugopaveśam  
indrādi devagaṇa vandita pādapīṭhaṁ brindāvanālayamaham  
[vasudevasūnum.

#### Translation

I worship Mukunda who possesses long eyes like the [unfolded] petals of lotus, with teeth like *kunda* flower, the moon and conch, who appears as the child of cowherds, the pedestal of whose feet is adored by the host of gods, Indra and others, who has Vrindāvana as his temple, who is the son of Vāsudeva.

#### Commentary

Mukunda is the name of Viṣṇu, sometimes transferred to Śiva. Etymologically, the word *mukun-da* is explained as « giver of liberation », *muku* being equivalent of *mukti*. Here the term refers to Kṛishṇa as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. Kṛishṇa is the eighth *avatāra* of Viṣṇu or rather a direct manifestation of Viṣṇu himself. *Kunda* is a kind of jasmine flower. Kṛishṇa belonged to the Yādava race; the Yādavas of ancient times were a pastoral race who dwelt on the river Yamunā. Vrindāvana is a wood in the district of Mathūra where Kṛishṇa as Gopāla spent his youth among the cowherds. His reputed parents were Vāsudeva and Devakī. That he is adored by the host of gods Indra and others brings out his supremacy over other gods.

9. See *Epigraphia Indica*, Vol. VII (1902-3), Calcutta, pp. 197-98.

10. I.e., of those coming from various countries.

## Verse 2

*śrivallabheti varadeti dayāpareti bhaktapriyeti*

[bhavaluṇṭhanakovideti  
nātheti nāgaśayaneti jagannivāsetyālāpanaṁ pratipadaṁ kuru me  
[mukunda.

## Translation

O Mukunda, at every step (or « at every word ») let me praise you as the beloved of Śrī, as the giver of boons, as [the God] endowed with the quality of compassion, as the beloved of those who show love to you, as [the God] who is skilled in destroying [the evil] of rebirth, as the Lord [of all], resting on the snake, as [one] who dwells in the world.

## Commentary

Śrī is the wife of Viṣṇu, i.e., Lakṣmī. In this verse Viṣṇu is straightaway addressed and praised. *Dayāpara*: « endowed with the quality of compassion », is a significant attribute of God as love. *Bhaktapriyaḥ* indicates that Viṣṇu not only wants love to him from his devotees but also shows reciprocal love for the devotees. *Bhavaluṇṭhanakovideti*, « skilled in destroying birth » signifies that Viṣṇu is the liberator from the cycle of rebirths. Viṣṇu is portrayed reclining on the serpent Śeṣa as the emblem of eternity. Śeṣa is represented as forming the couch and canopy of Viṣṇu while sleeping during the intervals of creation. But Viṣṇu is also represented as intimately present in the world of his creation.

## Verse 3

*jayatu jayatu devo devakīnandano'yaṁ*  
*jayatu jayatu kṛiṣṇo vṛiṣṇivaṁsapradīpaḥ*  
*jayatu jayatu meghaśyāmalaḥ komalāṅgo*  
*jayatu jayatu prithvībhāranāśo mukundaḥ.*

## Translation

Hail, hail, [to you], God, son of Devakī, here!  
Hail, hail, [to you], Kṛiṣṇa, the [shining] light of the race of Vṛṣṇi!  
Hail, hail, [to you], [God] dark-coloured like clouds, with tender  
[frame]  
Hail, hail [to you], Mukunda, the destroyer of the burden of the  
[world]

## Commentary

Here Kṛiṣṇa is directly addressed as the son of Devakī (*Devakī-nandana*). *Vṛṣṇi* is the name of a race to which Kṛiṣṇa belonged. *Pradīpaḥ* signifies literally lamp; here used figuratively to signify ornament. *Komalāṅga* means « of tender frame ». The burden of the world is the *karma-saṁsāra*.

## Verse 4

*mukunda mūrdhnā prañipatya yāce*  
 [bhavanta-mekānta-miyantamartham  
*avismṛitistvaccaraṇāravinde bhave bhave me'stu bhavatprasādāt.*

## Translation

O Mukunda! Prostrating with my head [bent], I implore your honour to grant only so much of the purpose [as befits] this end; [namely,] that I may never forget your lotus-feet in all births by the help of your grace.

## Commentary

*Mūrdhnā prañipatya* denotes « prostrating profoundly with the head bent ». *Iyantam ekāntam artham*: « only so much as the unique end »; the only purpose in life is stressed. The *bhakta* desires only one thing; namely, never to forget the sacred feet of the Lord in different births through the grace of God.

## Verse 5

*śrīmukunda padāmbhojamadhunaḥ paramādbhutam*  
*yatpāyino na muhyanti muhyanti yadapāyinaḥ.*

## Translation

What an immeasurable wonder! While those who drink the honey [contained] in the lotus-feet of Śrī Mukunda are not bewildered, those who do not drink it are deluded!

## Commentary

*Paramādbhutam* means « supreme wonder ». *Muhyanti*, « to be bewildered or perplexed » connotes « to be at a loss what to do, to go astray, to be deluded or confused ». Those who obtain the grace of God are illumined with the liberating knowledge, freeing them from ignorance and delusion; others do not receive this illumination.

## Verse 6

*nāhaṁ vande tava caraṇayor dvandvamadvandvahetoḥ*  
*kumbhīpākam gurumapi hare nārahaṁ nāpanetum*  
*ramyā rāmā mridutanulatā nandane nāpi rantum*  
*bhāve bhāve hridayabhavane bhāvayeyam bhavantam.*

## Translation

Hari! I adore your two feet not on account of [obtaining] the destruction of pairs [of opposites]; not for avoiding *kumbhīpākam* which is a severe hell; not for enjoying in delightful charming young women with slender body like the creeper in the pleasure ground of Indra; but birth after birth for meditating on you, the Lord present here, holding you in the temple of my heart.

### Commentary

The pair of opposites are pain and pleasure, like and dislike, etc. *Kumbhīpākam* is a kind of hell, filled with pain and suffering. *Svarga* is the heaven of Indra, the abode of inferior gods and of beautiful mortals, supposed to be situated on Mount Meru. Not to forget the lotus-feet of Viṣṇu (cfr verse 4) is realized in constantly meditating of Viṣṇu in the mind and heart of the devotee. This is itself the unique purpose of life; no motive of heaven or hell or *Indraloka* is adduced for such a love to Viṣṇu.

### Verse 7

*nāsthā dharme na vasunicaye naiva kāmopabhoge  
yad yad bhavyaṁ bhavatu bhagavan pūrvakarmānurūpam  
etat prārthyāṁ mama bahumatāṁ janmajanmāntare'pi  
tvatpādāmbhoruha yugagatā niṣcalā bhaktirastu.*

### Translation

Lord! I am not interested in righteousness; nor in the accumulation of wealth; nor in the enjoyment of lust. Let whatever happens be as it should be in accordance with the past action. What is requested by me as of highest esteem is that in [the course of] various births, in the two lotus-feet of yours I may possess unalterable love to you.

### Commentary

E. Hultzsich translated this verse which occurs in the inscription of Pagan thus: « Hail! Prosperity! [I have] no regard for merit, none for a heap of wealth, none at all for the enjoyment of lust. Whatever is to happen, let it happen. O God! in accordance with previous action. This [alone] is to be prayed for [and] highly valued by me: In every other birth also let [me] possess unswerving devotion to the pair of thy lotus-feet! ». Disinterest in righteousness (*nāsthā dharme*) does not mean that Kulaśekhara discredits the observance of righteousness but that he is not interested in the acquisition of merit, for he says immediately that the consequences of right action what it be, let it happen. All his mind and heart are set in the unchangeable love for Viṣṇu.

### Verse 8

*divi vā bhuvi vā mamāstu vāso narake vā narakāntaka prakāmaṁ  
avadhīrita śārādāravindau caraṇau te maraṇe'pi cintayāni.*

### Translation

Destroyer of hell! [What does it matter whether] I have my dwelling-place in heaven or on earth; or in hell, whatever the place be. I shall contemplate even in the hour of death your two feet which surpass [in beauty and freshness] the autumnal lotus flowers.

## Commentary

*Narahāntaka* here means destroyer of hell, i.e., destroyer of the cycle of rebirths. Again, the status of existence of the *bhakta* is indifferent to him, provided he ever contemplates Viṣṇu and keep him ever in his mind.

## Verse 9

*kriṣṇa tvadīya padapaṅkaja pañjarāntaḥ adyaiva me viṣatu mānasa*  
*[rājahamśaḥ*  
*prāṇaprayāṇa samaye kaphavātapittaiḥ kaṇṭhavarodhanavidhau*  
*[smaraṇam kutaste.*

## Translation

Krishna! As the swans [live] in the sacred lake Mānasa, this very day let my mind enter into your feet which are like the cage of lotus flowers. [For] at the moment when the vital air departs (i.e., at death) in such a way that phlegm, air, and bile choke the throat and chest, whence (or « how ») can I remember you?

## Commentary

*Mānasa* is the name of a sacred lake and place of pilgrimage on Mount Kailāśa, wither the wild swans repair in the breeding season at the beginning of the monsoons. The poet is aware of the difficulty in remembering the sacred feet of the Lord at the time of death; hence he is eager to contemplate him here and now, this very day, when he is physically fit for it. He wishes to enter into the feet of the Lord which are the cage of refuge for him; here obviously is meant the union with God in love.

## Verse 10

*cintayāmi harimeva santataṁ manda mandahasitānanāmbujam*  
*nandagopatanayaṁ parātparam nārādādi munibrindavanditam.*

## Translation

I continually think of Hari, who possesses the gently smiling lotus-face, who appears as the son of Nandagopa, the most sublime of the sublime, who is worshipped by the group of ascetics, Nārada and others.

## Commentary

Nārada is the chief of the ascetics and ṛishis. Nandagopa is the cowherd by whom Kriṣṇa was brought up. Nārada was convinced that love of Kriṣṇa was the only true means of felicity.

## Verse 11

*karacaraṇasaroje kāntiman netramīne*  
*śramamuṣi bhujavicivṛyākule'gādhamārgē*  
*harisarasi vigāhyāpīya tejojalaugharī*  
*bhavamamaruparikhinnaḥ khedamadaya tyajāmi*

*Translation*

Having entered the ocean of Hari, which has the lotus flowers of [sacred] hands and feet, with fish of sparkling eyes, which destroys the weariness [of the devotees], which spreads out with waves of shoulders, with unfathomable depth; and having drunk its bright waters; I who am exhausted by the arid tract of rebirths today get relieved of [all my] affliction.

*Commentary*

The poet wants to leave the desert of the life of rebirths and to enter the ocean of Viṣṇu. In this ocean the lotus flowers are his hands and feet; the fish are his bright eyes; the waves are his shoulders; the waters are his shining body. He longs for the complete union with Viṣṇu.

*Verse 12*

*sarasijanayane saśaṅkhacakre murabhidi mā viramasva citta rantum  
sukhataramaparaṁ nā jātu jāne haricarāṇa smaraṇāmritena tulyam.*

*Translation*

O Mind! Do not cease to delight in the destroyer of Mura, who has eyes like lotus flowers, who wears conch and wheel. I have never known in life any other pleasure similar to the ambrosia of meditating on the [sacred] feet of Hari.

*Commentary*

Mura is the name of a demon slain by Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa. Viṣṇu has four hands: one holds the conch shell; another a wheel or disc; another a club and the fourth a lotus. The conch shell represents the dwelling place of a demon, killed by Kṛṣṇa; the discus, a weapon given him as a reward for defeating Indra; the club was presented to him on the same occasion; the lotus in hand is a sign of Lakṣmī's presence even when her human features do not appear.

*Verse 13*

*mābhīr manda mano vicintya bahudhā yāmīściraṁ yātanāḥ  
nāmī naḥ prabhavanti pāparipavas svāmī nanu śrīdharah  
āḷasyaṁ vyapanīya bhaktisulabhaṁ dhyāyasva nārāyaṇaṁ  
lokasya vyasanāpanodanakaro dāsasya kim na kṣamaḥ.*

*Translation*

Do not be afraid, O stupid mind, which always and in various ways thinks of the torments of Yama. These who are cheats in the case of sinners are powerless with regard to us. [For] is not the bearer of prosperity our supreme Lord? [Therefore] having put aside sloth, meditate on Nārāyaṇa who is easy of access by means of love. How can he who expels the misfortunes of the world be incapable of removing those of his devotees?



## Commentary

*Śrīdhara*, « bearer of prosperity » is the epithet and form of Viṣṇu-Krishṇa. The poet reveals his unshakable trust and confidence in the goodness of Viṣṇu before whom the torments of Yama are powerless. *Bhakti* is the easy means of reaching Viṣṇu and of winning his favour.

## Verse 14

*bhavajaladhigatānām dvandvavātāhatānām  
sutaduhitrikalatratrāṇa bhārārditānām  
viśama viśayatoye majjatāmaplavānām  
bhavatu śaraṇameko viṣṇupoto narāṇām.*

## Translation

Let the ship of Viṣṇu be the sole refuge to men who have gone into the ocean of rebirths, who are baffled by the winds of likes and dislikes, and are afflicted by the burden of protecting their son, daughter and wife; with these thigs, full of sorrow, they are immersed in it without finding a plank of safety.

## Commentary

Viṣṇu is the sole refuge in the midst of worldly cares, pleasure and pain, fortune and misfortune, for these bring only sorrow. The safe place is Viṣṇu's feet.

## Verse 15

*bhavajaladhimagādhaṁ dustaraṁ nistareyaṁ  
kathamahamiti ceto mā sma gāḥ kātaraṭvam  
sarasiḍadriṣi deve tāvakī bhaktirekā  
narakabhīdi niṣaṇṇa tārayiṣyatyavaśyam.*

## Translation

O mind! Fear not as to how you can cross the ocean of births, unfathomable, and hard to cross. Your love alone, shown to the God with lotus eyes, the destroyer of Naraka, is required to put you across it certainly.

## Commentary

Naraka is the name of a demon whom Krishṇa slew in his attempt to recover the stolen jewels. Here again *bhakti* alone is proposed as required to cross the ocean of rebirths.

## Verse 16

*triṣṇātōye madanapavanoddhūtamohormimāle  
tārāvarite tanayasahajagrāha saṅghākule ca  
saṁsārākhye mahati jaladhau majjatām nas tridhāman  
pādāmbhoje varada bhavato bhaktināvaṁ prayaccha.*

### Translation

To us who are plunged into the great ocean, called the cycle of rebirths, with the waters of desire, agitated by the waves of lust produced by the wind of passion, perplexed by the whirlpool of wife and by the crowd of crocodiles of children and kith and kin, O Lord, established in three abodes, the giver of boons, bestow the boat of love to [reach] your lotus feet.

### Commentary

Once again *bhakti* is proposed as the safe boat to reach Viṣṇu when man is immersed in the ocean of empirical existence amidst desire, lust and passion, and wordly cares of wife and children and relatives.

### Verse 17

*mā drākṣaṁ kṣīnapuṇyam kṣaṇamapi bhavato bhaktihīnān padābje  
mā śrauṣaṁ śrāvyabandhaṁ tava caritamapāśyānyadākhyānajātam  
mā smārṣaṁ mādharma tvāmapi bhuvanaṁ cetasā'pahnuvānān  
mā bhūvaṁ tvatsaparyāvvyatikararahito janmajanmāntare'pi.*

### Translation

I shall not look at those whose virtue is at an end and who do not show love even for a moment to your lotus feet. I shall not hear the traditions, though interesting to hear, which tell other birth tales instead of speaking of your life story. O Mādhava, Lord of the universe, I shall not think of those who disclaim you in their mind. In no birth shall I abandon the union with your worshippers.

### Commentary

The two principal senses, sight and hearing, are directed to the Lord alone and should be protected against obstacles to this experience of Viṣṇu. Association with Viṣṇu-bhaktas is sought after as the best company suited to worship Viṣṇu.

### Verse 18

*vātsalyādabhayapradāna samayādārtārti nirvāpanāt  
audāryā daghasoṣaṇādagaṇitaśreyaḥ padaprapāṇāt  
sevyāḥ śrīpatireka eva satatam santyatra sad sāksīṇaḥ  
prahlādaśca vibhīṣaṇaśca karirād pāñcālyahalyā dhruvaḥ.*

### Commentary

On account of his affection, of his bestowal of security, of extinguishing the pain of the afflicted at the proper time, of his generosity, of destroying the sins, of the attainment of the incalculably blissful state, the Lord of Śrī alone is for ever to be honoured. Prahlāda, Vibhīṣaṇa, Gaṇendra, Draupadī, Ahalyā, Dhruva: these six are the witnesses for this.

### Commentary

Garirād is Gajendra, the lordly elephant. Pāñcālā, the princess of the Pāñcālas, is Draupadī. When the Pāṇḍavas lost their kingdom to the Kauravas, Draupadī was taken a prisoner and when Duhśāsana abused her and took her clothes off, Krishṇa took compassion on her and restored her clothes as fast as they were torn. When Hiranyaśipu ordered his son Prahlēda to be killed because of his son's devotion to Viṣṇu, Prahlēda was protected from any harm by Viṣṇu who appeared as man-lion and slew his father. Vibhīṣaṇa, a younger brother of Rāvaṇa, was virtuous and opposed to the practices of the Rākshasas. He was thrown out by Rāvaṇa; then he became a friend of Rāmachandra. Rama, who is an avatāra of Viṣṇu, after defeating Rāvaṇa appointed him to the throne of Laṅka. When Ahalyā was disgraced by her husband Gautama after he found out the seduction by Indra of her, Rāma, the avatāra of Viṣṇu, restored her to her natural state and reconciled her with her husband. Dhruva became a ṛishi and practised austerities in spite of all distractions induced by Indra. He was favoured by Viṣṇu who raised him to the skies as the pole-star. Viṣṇu is quite often portrayed as slayer of demons, fighter for gods, the saviour and helper of the gods in their battle with the demons. Gajendras are chief divine elephants, mythical guardians of the quarters of the universe, used by Indra and Viṣṇu. These personages testify to Viṣṇu's affection, giver of safety, remover of suffering, generosity, destroyer of sin and unlawfulness.

### Verse 19

*jihve kīrtaya keśavaṁ muraripuṁ ceto bhaja śrīdharaṁ  
pāṇīdvandva samarcayācyutakathāś śrotradvaya tvam śruṇu  
kriṣṇaṁ lokaya locanadvaya harer gacchāṅghriyugmālayaṁ  
jighra ghrāṇa mukundapādātulasīṁ mūrdhan namādhokṣajam.*

### Translation

Tongue, Sing Keśava! Mind, be devoted lovingly to the foe of Mura! Both hands joined, worship the Lord of Lakshmī! Both ears, hear the tales of the imperishable! Both eyes, see Krishṇa! Two feet, go to the temples of Hari! Nose, smell the *tulasi* flower at the feet of Mukunda! Head, honour the one under an axle.

### Commentary

Kesava, « having much or fine hair » is a name of Viṣṇu. Mura is the name of a Daitya slain by Viṣṇu-Krishṇa. « Being below the axle » is a title of Viṣṇu. The poet shows here how the devotee should concentrate his whole body and mind on Viṣṇu, experiencing him internally and externally.

## Verse 20

*he lokāśśruṇuta prasūtimaraṇavyādheś cikitsāmimāṇ  
yogajñāssamudāharanti munayo yāṁ yājñavalkyādayaḥ  
antarjyoti rameya mekamamṛitaṁ kṛṣṇākhyamāpiyatāṁ  
tatpītaṁ paramauśadhaṁ vitanute nirvāṇamātyantikam.*

## Translation

Hey people, listen! I propose the cure for the disease of birth and death. Yājñavalkya and others who know well yoga mention this [cure]. Drink this unquenchable ambrosia of great revile, which is Kṛṣṇa by name, who shines as inner light. This supreme medicine, drunk once, spreads out the unalterable final emancipation.

## Commentary

The true cure for all ills or rebirth is the yoga of reviling in Kṛṣṇa who shines as the inner light, which includes the uttering of the sweet name of Kṛṣṇa and relishing the reality of Kṛṣṇa who shines as inner light in the inmost essence of the soul. Such an experience leads to final emancipation.

## Verse 21

*he martyāḥ paramaṁ hitaṁ śruṇuta vo vakṣyāmi saṁkṣepataḥ  
sarṁsārārṇavamāpadūrmibahulaṁ samyak praviśya sthitāḥ  
nānājñānamapāśya cetasi namo nārāyaṇāyetyamuṁ  
mantraṁ sapraṇavaṁ praṇāmasahitaṁ prāvartayadhvaṁ muhuḥ*

## Translation

Hey mortals, listen again, I tell in brief the supreme good to you who are situated completely and gone far deeply in the sea of rebirths, abounding in the waves of misfortune. Putting aside various kinds of knowledge in your mind, saying the sacred prayer: *namo nārāyaṇa*, together with the sacred syllable OM, and bow, turn around repeatedly.

## Commentary

Ūrmi signifies « wave » of troubles and afflictions, six of which assail human life: hunger, thirst, heat, cold, greed and error. *Praṇāma* means bow, obeisance, reverent salutation. *Sapraṇavam* denotes the sacred syllable OM. The efficacy of the Nārāyaṇa mantra is stressed in this verse.

## Verse 22

*prithvī reṇuraṇuḥ payāṁsi kaṇikā phalgussphuliṅgo laghuḥ  
tejo niśvasanaṁ maruttanutaraṁ randhraṁ susūkṣmaṁ nabhaḥ  
kṣudrā rudrapitāmahaprabhṛitayaḥ kīṭāssamastāssurāḥ  
driṣṭe yatra sa tāvako vijayate bhūmā'vadhūtāvadhiḥ.*

## Translation

Whatever is looked at, there appears the world as an atom of dust, water as a little drop, fire as a light reddish spark, wind as thin air, sky as very tiny hole, all the gods beginning with Rudra, Brahmā and so forth as little worms; your glory alone appears, surpassing the limits of all these existing things.

## Commentary

The five great elements that appear so gigantic, so powerful and immense are tiny little things when we consider the glory of Viṣṇu. The vast land is an atom of dust, great seas a drop of water, the great fiery bodies a small reddish spark, the powerful wind is thin air, and the sky a tiny hole; all the gods, Rudra, Brahmā and so forth are little worms. The glory of Viṣṇu surpasses the limits of these beings.

## Verse 23

*baddenāñjalīnā natena śirasā gātraissaromodgamaiḥ  
kañṭhena svaragaḍgadana nayanenodgīrṇabāṣpāmbunā  
nityaṁ tvaccaraṇāravindayugaladhyānāmṛitāsvādīnām  
asmākaṁ sarasīruhākṣa satataṁ saṁpadyatāṁ jīvitam.*

## Translation

O lotus-eyed! With hands held together [in veneration], with head bowed, with body with hairs erect, with throat with faltering voice, with eyes bust out with tears, always tasting the ambrosia of meditating on your two lotus feet, being ourselves, let our lives for ever be fulfilled.

## Commentary

Here loving meditation on Viṣṇu is proposed as the fulfilment of one's life and such a contemplation overflows in the body of the *bhakta*. Deep sentiment of love of Viṣṇu creates in the *bhakta* certain signs of deep feeling such as erection of the hair, faltering voice, tearful eyes.

## Verse 24

*he gopālaka he kripājalanidhe he sindhukanyāpate  
he kaṁsāntaka he gajendrakaruṇāpārīṇa he mādharma  
he rāmānuja he jagatrayaguro he puṇḍarikākṣa mām  
he gopījananātha pālaya paraṁ jānāmi na tvām vinā.*

## Translation

Hey Gopala! Heh Ocean of mercy! Hey husband of the daughter of the ocean! Hey destroyer of Kāṁsa! Hey bestower of grace to Gajendra! Hey Mādhava! Hey Rāmānuja! Hey master of the three worlds! Hey lotus-eyed! Hey Lord of the clan of cow-herds! Protect me; I do not know anyone else except you.

### Commentary

*Gopālaka* means « cow-herd »; here it refers to Krishṇa. *Mādhava* is son or descendent of Madhu, a man of Yādava race; here it refers to Krishṇa. *Kaṁsa* is the name of a king slain by Krishṇa. Krishṇa is younger brother of Balarāma; hence he is called Rāmānuja: *anuja*, « born after », « younger brother ». *Sindhu-kanyā*, « daughter of the ocean » is Lakshmī.

### Verse 25

*bhaktāpāyabhujāṅga gārudamaṇis trailokyarakṣāmaṇiḥ*  
*gopīlocanacātakāmbudamaṇis saundarya mudrāmaṇiḥ*  
*yaḥ kāntāmaṇirukmiṇiḥghanakuca dvandvaikabhūṣāmaṇiḥ*  
*śreyo devasikhāmaṇir diśatu no gopālacūḍāmaṇiḥ.*

### Translation

This pearl of vulture to the devotees' serpents of danger, the pearl of salvation to the three worlds, the pearl of cloud to the cuckoos of the eyes of cowherds, the pearl of the mark of beauty, the indispensable pearl of ornament to the firm breasts of Rukminī, who is the pearl of ladies, this precious pearl of the child of cowherds, the precious divine pearl, grant us blessings.

### Commentary

The dangers that occur to the bhaktas are called serpents and the enemy of these serpents, Garuda, is referred to Krishṇa. Krishṇa is the jewel of the cloud to the birds of *sādhaka*, which are the eyes of the gopīs; namely, he is the refuge of the gopīs who love him through many ways and means. « The precious divine pearl » means « the pearl in the diadems of gods », i.e., the Supreme God.

### Verse 26

*śatruccchedaika mantraṁ sakalamupanisad vākyasampūjya mantraṁ*  
*saṁsārottāra mantraṁ samupacitatamas saṅghaniryāṇa mantraṁ*  
*sarvaiśvaryaika mantraṁ vyāsanabhujagasaṁdaṣṭa santrāṇa*  
*jihve śrīkṛiṣṇa mantraṁ japa japa satataṁ janmasāphalya mantraṁ.*

### Translation

Tongue, always repeatedly say the prayer of Krishṇa. This prayer destroys the enemies; this prayer fulfils all wishes and has been celebrated by the words of the Upanishads. This prayer delivers you from the cycle of rebirths. This prayer dispels the throng of the accumulated darkness [of ignorance]. This prayer brings all benefits. This prayer is the rescue of those bitten by the snake of misery. This prayer is the purpose of birth itself.

## Commentary

The mantra spoken of here is *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*; it is *nāma-mantra*. There is no better remedy against all evils and obstacles to salvation except in the efficacy of the *mantra* of *Śrī Kṛṣṇa* which is *Kṛṣṇa* himself.

## Verse 27

*vyāmahaprasamauśadhaṁ munimanovṛittipravṛittyaūśadhaṁ  
dāityendrārtikarauśadhaṁ tribhuvanīsañjīvanauśadham  
bhaktātyantahitaūśadhaṁ bhavabhayaṣṭadghaṇṣanaikaūśadhaṁ  
śreyahprāptikarauśadhāṁ piba manaś śrīkṛṣṇa divyaūśadham.*

## Translation

Mind, drink the divine medicine of *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*. This medicine overpowers mental confusion. The medicine sets in motion the disposition of ascetics' minds towards himself. This medicine makes the *asura* princes afflicted. This medicine alone animates the three worlds. This medicine gives endless benefit to the devotees. This medicine is indispensable to destroy the dread of births; this medicine makes attain all blessings.

## Commentary

Here again, it is claimed that *Kṛṣṇa* alone is the only remedy, the only medicine against all ills. The medicine not only cures one from ills of mental confusion but also creates the necessary dispositions of positive ascent to possess *Kṛṣṇa*. This medicine also fights against the *asuras* who are enemies of God and bestows all benefits on *Kṛṣṇa*'s devotees. *Dāitya* are descendents of *Diti*, *Asura*, especially *Rāhu*.

## Verse 28

*āmnāyābhyasanānyaraṇyaruditaṁ vedavratānyanvahaṁ  
medaśchedaphalāni pūrtavidhayassarve hutaṁ bhasmani  
tīrthānāmavagāhanāni ca gajasnānaṁ vinā yatpada-  
dvandvāmbhoruhasaṁsmṛitīr vijayate devassa nārāyaṇaḥ.*

## Translation

Without the remembrance of his two lotus feet, the study of the sacred texts (*Vedas*) would become howling in the jungle; the observance of the religious ordinances of the *Vedas* would become fit only for reducing the fat [in the body]; charitable works like building tanks would become like sacrifice made in ashes; bathing in sacred place would become like elephants' bathing; let our God *Nārāyaṇa* be glorious.

## Commentary

*Āmnāya*, « tradition » refers to sacred texts, sacred lore. *Vrata*, « ordinance » is religious duty, religious observances and works.

*Pūrta*, « filled, bestowed » refers to reward or fulfilment, i.e., charitable works. *Tīrtha*, « right place or moment » refers to place of sacred bath or of religious instruction. Without genuine love for Viṣṇu all other religious observances like recitation of sacred texts, observances of all kinds together with asceticism become meaningless. Elephants bath and immediately take the dust of the street and throw it over their own head.

#### Verse 29

*śrīman nāma procya nārāyaṇākhyam ke na prāpur vāñchitam*  
[pāpino'pi  
*hā naḥ pūrvam vāk pravrittā na tasmin tena prāptam*  
[garbhavāsādiduḥkham

#### Translation

Who are the ones who, even though sinners, do not obtain their desires, when they have sung well the illustrious name of Nārāyaṇa? Alas, our tongue did not turn to him long before! Is it not because of this that the sorrows like dwelling in the womb are attained by us?

#### Commentary

« Sorrows like dwelling in the womb » refers to being born in various lives of human existence. *Śrīmannāma* can be also taken to mean « the sacred Name Nārāyaṇa associated with his consort Śrī ».

#### Verse 30

*majjanmanah phalamidaṁ madhukaitābhāre matprārthanīya*  
[madanugraha eṣa eva  
*tvad bhṛitya bhṛitya paricārakabhṛitya bhṛitya bhṛityasya bhṛitya*  
[iti mām smara lokanātha.

#### Translation

Oh, the destroyer of [the asuras] Madhu and Kaitābha! Oh the Lord of the universe! This is the fruit of my birth! This is the grace I seek, which you must bestow on me! You should consider me as the servant of the servant who is the servant of the servant of the attendant to the servant of your servant.

#### Commentary

The prayer to Viṣṇu by Kulaśekhara is to consider him to be the seventh servant in the series of servants of servants (*aṭiyārkkū aṭiyār*). This conception of servant of servants in a series is attributed to Ālvārs. The insistence is obviously on the experience of love between the servant (*dāsyā bhakti*) and the Master God Viṣṇu.



## Verse 31

*nāthe naḥ puruṣottame trijagatāmekādhiṇe cetasā  
sevye svasya padasya dātari sure nārāyaṇe tiṣṭhati  
yaṁ kañcit puruṣādhamam katipaya grāmeśamalpārthadam  
sevāyai mrigayāmahe naramaḥo mūṭā varākā vayam.*

## Translation

Nārāyaṇa the supreme Person, Ruler of the three worlds, worthy to be honoured by the mind, giver of his abode, God, is standing as our Lord. [Not approaching him], we are seeking to serve someone who is the lowest person, who possesses some villages, insignificant giver, undistinguished man! What wretched, foolish beings we are!

## Commentary

When we have the supreme Lord of all the worlds and the supreme donor of all gifts, we seek human or divine beings for their trifling gifts. Such an attitude is one of folly.

## Verse 32

*madana parihara sthitiṁ madīye manasi mukunda  
[padāravindadhāmni  
haranayana kṛṣṇanunā kṛṣṇo'si smarasi na cakrapārākramam  
[murāreḥ.*

## Translation

Lustful man, get away from being in my heart which is the dwelling place of the lotus feet of Mukunda. You are weakened by the fire of Śiva's eye; will you not think of the power of the wheel of the one who killed Mura?

## Commentary

Madana can refer to the lustful man that is in every human being or to the god of lust, signifying in both cases simply lust. When one is full of *bhakti*, love of God, there is no place for lust in one's heart. Kāma, the god of lust was reduced to ashes by fire from Śiva's third eye for his offense in inspiring amorous thoughts for Pārvati when he was engaged in ascetical practices.

## Verse 33

*tatvaṁ bruvāṇāni paraṁ parasmāt madhu kṣarantīva satāṁ phalāni  
prāvartaya prāñjalirasmi jihve nāmāni nārāyaṇa gocarāṇi.*

## Translation

Tongue, I salute you; spread the names that are related to Nārāyaṇa. They declare the most supreme essence of the Supreme; they are like honey overflowing; they are the fruits which the good desire.

## Commentary

Prāñjali: having the folded hands outstretched in token of respect or humility.

## Verse 34

*idaṁ sarīraṁ pariṇāmapeśalaṁ patatyavaśyaṁ slathasandhi*  
*kimauśadhaiḥ klišyasi mūḍha durmate nirāmayam* [jarjaram  
*[kriṣṇarasāyanam piba.*

## Translation

This body, tender and transforming, certainly decays, frail with loose points; perplexed fool! why are you tormented, seeking medicines? Drink the healthy elixir of life which is Krishna.

## Commentary

The foolish man seeks after various medicines when he is sure to decay and finally die. The life-producing medicine (*rasāyana*) is Vishṇu alone. Drink this elixir of life.

## Verse 35

*dārā-vārākaravarasutā-te-tanūjo-viriñciḥ*  
*stotā vedastava suragaṇo bhrityavargah prasādaḥ*  
*muktir māyā jagadavikalāṁ tāvakī devakī te*  
*mātā mitraṁ balaripusutastavayato'nyan na jāne.*

## Translation

The most beautiful daughter of the milky ocean is your spouse. The four-faced is your son. The Veda praises you. The host of gods are your servants. Your grace is salvation. The world is the stamp of your *māyā*. Your mother is Devakī. The son of Mahendra, who strikes down the enemy with might, Arjuna, is your friend. Regarding you I do not know anything else.

## Commentary

The daughter of the milky ocean is Lakshmi. Viriñci is the name of Brahmā. Brahmā is four-faced, though originally he had five faces and lost one when it was burnt off by the fire of Śiva's third eye because he had spoken disrespectfully. Brahmā in later mythology is supposed to issue forth from Vishṇu or mere manifestation of Vishṇu. Māyā is the mysterious power of God by means of which he creates the world and sustains it.

## Verse 36

*kriṣṇo rakṣatu no jagattrayaguruḥ kriṣṇam namasyāmyaham*  
*kriṣṇenāmaraśatravo vinihatāḥ kriṣṇāya tasmai namaḥ*  
*kriṣṇādeva samutthitam jagadidaṁ kriṣṇasya dāso'smyaham*  
*kriṣṇe tiṣṭati sarvametadakhilam he kriṣṇa rakṣasva mām.*

## Translation

Krishna, the guru of the three worlds, protect us. I worship Krishna. The enemies of the gods were destroyed by Krishna. To Krishna honour! This whole world sprang from Krishna. I am Krishna's disciple. All beings are established by Krishna. O Krishna, protect me.

## Commentary

Krishṇa is called *guru* since he dispels ignorance and gives the light of wisdom. Here again, the poet feels deeply how he is the servant of Krishṇa and wants to serve him and love him accordingly as his master and Lord.

## Verse 37

*tatvaṁ prasīda bhagavan kuru mayyanāthe  
viṣṇo kripāṁ paramakāruṇikaḥ kila tvam  
saṁsāra sāgara nimagna mananta dīna-  
muddartumarhasi hare puruṣottamo'si.*

## Translation

O Lord, full of good qualities, all-pervasive, Being without end, the most merciful; you, show mercy to me, a destitute. Bring me ashore, the wretched me immersed in the sea of rebirth. You are Hari who tears off the sorrows of your devotees. You are the supreme Person.

## Commentary

Here is a passionate cry of the poet for Viṣṇu's grace and help to redeem him from the sea of rebirths.

## Verse 38

*namāmi nārāyaṇapādapaṅkajaṁ karomi nārāyaṇapūjanaṁ sadā  
vadāmi nārāyaṇanāma nirmalaṁ smarāmi nārāyaṇatatvamavyayam.*

## Translation

I venerate Nārāyaṇa's lotus feet. I always do Nārāyaṇa's sacrifices. I utter the immaculate name, Nārāyaṇa. I think of Nārāyaṇa's imperishable essence.

## Commentary

*Karomi*, *vadāmi*, *smarāmi* are significant to denote worship in body or action, speech and mind; they correspond to *pūjanam*, *kīrtanam*, and *smaranam*. *Namāmi* is the sum-total of all these acts, leading to his sacred feet.

## Verse 39

*śrīnātha nārāyaṇa vāsudeva śrīkṛiṣṇa bhaktapriya cakrapāṇe  
śrīpadmanābhācyuta kaiṭabhāre śrīrāma padmākṣa hare murāre.*

## Translation

Śrīnātha, Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva, Śrī Krishṇa, dear to the devotees, wheel in hand, firm nave of the sacred lotus, Kaiṭabhāve, Śrī Rāma, Padmākṣa, Hari, destroyer of Mura.

## Commentary

These are the names of Viṣṇu.

## Verse 40

*ananta vaikunṭha mukunda kṛṣṇa govinda dāmodara mādhaveti  
vaktuṁ samartho'pi na vakti kaścīt aho janānām*

[vyasanābhīmukhyam.

## Translation

Eternal, Vaikuntha, Mukunda, Kṛṣṇa, Govinda, Dāmodara, Mādhava: thus people call [God], opposing their evil passion. [Even though] possessed with power to pronounce [these names], no one utters them. Alas, [what a surprise!]

## Commentary

Some more names and titles of Viṣṇu. The poet expresses his surprise that no one utters them.

## Verse 41

*dhyāyanti ye viṣṇumanantamavyayam hrutpadmamadhya satataṁ*

[vyavasthitam

*samāhitānām satatābhaya-pradaṁ te yānti siddhiṁ paramāṁ ca*

[vaiṣṇavīm.

## Translation

Whosoever meditates on the all pervading, eternal, imperishable, the ever permanent indwelling [God] in the centre of the lotus-heart, the one who grants refuge to those who always concentrate on him, will obtain the supreme Vaiṣṇava perfection.

## Commentary

The supreme Vaiṣṇava perfection is *moksha* as understood by the Vaiṣṇavas; i.e. attainment of the feet of God, united with him in perfect love.

## Verse 42

*kṣīra sāgara taraṅga śikarāsāra tārakita cārumūrtaye*

*bhogibhoga śayanīyaśāyine mādhavāya madhuvidviṣe namaḥ.*

## Translation

Honour to Mādhava who has a beautiful body, bestarred like the spray of the waves of the milky ocean, who is sleeping on the coil of the serpent as the couch, who is the enemy of Madhu.

## Commentary

Madhu is a demon slain by Kṛṣṇa. Kaitābha and Madhu were two demons who sprang from the ear of Viṣṇu while he was asleep at the end of a kalpa, and were about to kill Brahmā who was lying on the lotus that sprang from Viṣṇu.

## Verse 43

*āścaryametaddi manuṣya loke sudhām parityajya viṣaṁ pibanti  
nāmāni nārāyaṇagocarāṇi tyaktvā'nyavācaḥ kuhakāḥ paṭhanti.*

*Translation*

In this world of men this is a wonder. [That is to say], rogues, disregarding the names that belong to Nārāyaṇa, recite aloud other words. [This is like] drinking poison, abandoning nectar.

*Commentary*

Perhaps there is here an allusion to the other gods, indicated by the word *names*, the worship of which is wrong and that the worshippers of other gods are not honest. The text is not very clear. It can be understood as referring to those who are godless and without any religion at all.

*Verse 44*

*lāṭīnetrapuṭīpayodharaghaṭīrevātaṭīduṣkuṭī-  
pāṭīradrumavarṇanena Kavibhir mūdairdīnaṁ nīyate  
govindeti janārdaneti jagatāṁ nātheti kṛṣṇeti ca  
vyāhārāḥ samayas tadekamanasāṁ puruṣāmātikrāmati.*

*Translation*

Foolish poets spend the days describing the eyes, funnel-shaped breasts, and the jars of women of Lāṭa (country), and the despicable huts and sandal tree on the banks of the river, Reva (Narmadā), etc. To the men who engage their mind solely on the one Lord, days pass by with the utterances of hymns [such as] « Govinda, Janārdana, Jagannātha, Kṛṣṇa ».

*Commentary*

*Laṭi*, i.e., women belonging to Laṭa country. Since they commonly appear with jar or pot of water carried by them, there is a reference to it also.

*Verse 45*

*ayācyamakreyamayātayāmam apācyamakṣayyamadurbharaṁ me  
astyeva pātheyamitaḥ prayāṇe śrīkṛṣṇanāmāmṛita bhāgadheyam.*

*Translation*

Not necessary for sacrifice or purchase, not stale (ineffectual), not necessary to be cooked, indestructible, not hard to bear, is the food determined for the journey [in the world of rebirths]; [that is] the riches of the nectar of Sri Kṛṣṇa's name.

*Commentary*

Here again the easiness of the devout recital of Kṛṣṇa's names and the futility of other practices without real love for him are stressed.

## Verse 46

yasya priyau śrutadharau kavilokavīrau  
 mitre dvijanmavara pāraśavābhūtām  
 tenāmbujākṣacaranāmbujaṣaṭpadena  
 rājñā kritā kritiriyam kulaśekharaṇa.

## Translation

The one who has as dear friends the twice-born (brāhmins) and men of mixed caste, who retain what has been heard, and heroes of the world of poets; such a man, the king Kulaśekhara, who takes refuge like bees in the lotus feet of the lotus-eyed Śrī Mukunda, composed this literary work.

## Commentary

*Pāraśava* means « mixed caste », i.e., offspring of *brāhmaṇa* and *śūdra*. Among king Kulaśekhara's friends are found both high and low caste people; they are learned men, heroes of the world of poets. This may be the colophone added later on.

## Verse 47

iti śrī mukundamālāstotraṁ sampūrṇam.

## Translation

Thus ends the sacred hymn *Śrī Mukundamālā*.

## CONCLUSION

After praying for the help of God Viṣṇu in order that he may sing his holy names, Kulaśekhara greets his God with jubilant praise that God may long live and be ever triumphant. The poet asks for only one favour from God: namely, never to forget, with his grace, his sacred feet in every birth. His only motive in worshipping God is to beg the grace of ever meditating on him in every birth, and not to obtain release or avoid hell, or to enjoy Indraloka. He prays for love of God (*bhakti*) as the only thing needed in all birth, that he is not interested in the consequences of righteousness and good deed. Such a *bhakti* consists in contemplating the sacred feet of God always, both at death and out of the hour of death, in longing for the feet of God, in melting in the body of God, and in experiencing his grace, sweetness, his various senses in his physical appearance. The only food for the mind is to think of Hari. The only refuge to resort to in the midst of evils and sufferings is God Viṣṇu and *bhakti* to him. God alone is the boat of safety in the ocean of misery and rebirth. *Bhakti* to God alone is the effective means of crossing such an ocean. This *bhakti* is to be received from God as his grace. *Bhakti* pervades the saint's thoughts, words, actions, his company and his surroundings. *Bhakti* is to be experienced in the five senses in

order that it may slowly and steadily sink in the person of the devotee. God alone is the medicine against the rebirth; he indwells in the heart of the *bhakta* who has to realize him in meditation and contemplation. *Nārāyaṇa mantra* is a spiritual and « mystical » way of realizing the essence of God within oneself. The great universe itself is tiny, compared to God whose glory is realised in the being of the *bhakta*. Such an experience of God is manifested in many signs of the *bhakta's* body. God Viṣṇu is the only God that the *bhakta* knows and no one else. God is the precious pearl in every aspect of the *bhakta's* daily life and experience. *Śrī Kṛishṇa mantra* is the only true *mantra*, most efficacious to dispel darkness of ignorance and illusion, to cross over the sea of rebirth, to obtain God's grace and all other benefits.

God is the only medicine against all ills of every kind. *Bhakti* to him alone is fruitful in obtaining salvation; all other religious observances and ascetical practices are vain and fruitless without inner *bhakti* to God. God's essence is concretised in the *mantra*; by repeating the *mantra* one realizes God in oneself. The supreme grace which the poet asks for is to be a servant of servants of God in the form of *dāśya bhakti* which consists in being at the feet of God, the supreme Master and Lord, as his servant, united to his sacred feet in love and service. This expression of *bhakti* deeply realizes the *bhakta's* unworthiness before the Master and in humble submission and surrender he serves him lovingly; but this kind of service should not be understood in the sense of something external, doing some pious external acts, praising in words the names of God and singing in songs his glories and qualities. This service is deeply meditative and inner, relishing God's love for him and attaining his mode of being. In other words, *dāśya bhakti* implies meditation, contemplation and inner relish and taste which is all spiritual, and expresses itself in simple faith and surrender to God's feet.

In face of this God-realization all other ends of human life are dispised by the poet. They are insignificant and temporary and entail perpetual going round in the cycle of rebirth and transmigration. He does not fear any of his enemies since he has Hari as his Lord. He confesses that he knows only Kṛishṇa and that it is sufficient for him because Kṛishṇa is the essence of all that exists and that he experiences. *Nārāyaṇa* and Kṛishṇa are the only hope and salvation for mankind; hence they are proposed as the unique essence, unique medicine, unique *mantra*, unique means of salvation, unique purpose of life.

Such, I think, is the type of Vaishṇava religion that is taught in this beautiful poem of Kulaśekhara Ālvār.